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New York

President Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I first give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Sir John Kaputin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Papua New Guinea.

Sir John Kaputin (Papua New Guinea): On behalf of the people and Government of Papua New Guinea, I join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to your prestigious post. Your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at the dawn of the new millennium shows the high esteem in which the international community holds both you personally and your country, Finland. We are confident that you will guide the historic fifty-fifth session to a successful conclusion.

The skill with which your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, cooperated to develop the theme of the recent Millennium Summit, and presided over the drafting of the outcome document and ensured the smooth management of the Summit earned our sincere appreciation for a job very well done. We also congratulate him on his very positive contribution to our collective deliberations during the previous year.

May I also take this opportunity, through you, Sir, to heartily congratulate the heads of State of both Finland and Namibia on their magnanimous stewardship and successful conclusion of the recent unprecedented large assembly of approximately 150 heads of State and Government in New York, which paved the way for the pursuit of our common vision and security into the twenty-first century.

Beyond the millennium celebrations, this is a time for reflection and looking ahead. The Millennium Summit took place on the eve of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Papua New Guinea's independence. The same anniversary also marks the first quarter century of my country's membership of the United Nations. It is therefore an apt occasion both for reflecting on experience and for looking ahead.

My particular focus is on the changing character of, need for and potential for international cooperation. The conjunction of the millennium with Papua New Guinea's silver anniversary invites us to take a number of different time perspectives: the short, medium and long terms. For those of us who have been privileged to play an active part in public life during this period, it also provides the opportunity to compare the ambitions we had 25 years ago with the challenges we face now.

As the Secretary-General recently reminded us in the very title of the document (A/54/2000) he prepared to guide and stimulate the Millennium Summit, the United Nations was formed in the name and with the objective of furthering the common purposes of "We the peoples of the United Nations". In similar fashion, the Constitution that came into effect when my country became independent was made and adopted in the name of "We the people of Papua New Guinea".

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As someone who had the honour of participating in making the Papua New Guinea Constitution, I am very mindful of the national goals and directive principles we set for ourselves at independence. While some have a distinctively national character — such as preserving, developing and building on Papua New Guinean ways — others resemble challenges that the United Nations faces today. They include such universal challenges as promoting integral human development, equity and participation, and sustainable use of natural resources and the environment. They also include the challenge of maintaining, strengthening and making mutually beneficial use of national sovereignty and self-reliance.

But look at us now. What have we achieved? What remains to be done? The most striking feature of contemporary Papua New Guinea is the way in which we have had to trim our objectives. Our situation is, obviously, not unique, but it certainly warrants the most careful consideration.

When the present Government, led by the Prime Minister, The Honourable Sir Mekere Morauta, came to office in the middle of last year, we set ourselves five very carefully defined objectives: to restore integrity to State institutions; to stabilize our national currency — the kina — and the national budget; to remove obstacles to investment and growth; and to continue the process of working for lasting peace in Bougainville by peaceful means.

The national goals and directive principles continue to guide our long-term ambitions and plans. But experience and the realities of governance in the age of globalization have required us to focus on much more specific, short- and medium-term objectives. We cannot blame others — or even such largely impersonal processes as economic and technological globalization — for every aspect of our current situation. Much of the responsibility lies with leaders and institutions at home. Both fortunately and unfortunately, it is part of the human condition at the start of the twenty-first century that we are not on our own. Despite important differences in origins, processes and outcomes, our situation is not unique. Many other developing countries face similar challenges in the short and medium terms.

International cooperation is an important key to collective self-help, both between countries with similar weaknesses and strengths, and between countries that are different and complementary — especially rich and poor.

As regards global cooperation, as a member of the global community Papua New Guinea is able to draw on support from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Asian Development Bank, our development cooperation partners in Europe, and the Asia-Pacific countries that have formed themselves into the Friends of Papua New Guinea.

While my delegation has come to New York to discuss global issues and explore the potential for global cooperation, Papua New Guinea also participates in various forms of regional, interregional and bilateral cooperation. Papua New Guinea recognizes the value of, and is firmly committed to further strengthening, global cooperation through bodies like the World Trade Organization (WTO).

My Government is disappointed that the next round of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations has been delayed, and calls for them to be held at the earliest possible opportunity.

As one of the countries where increasing areas of land are already becoming unusable or actually disappearing as a result of rising sea-levels caused by climate change, we believe in the urgent need for full implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

On an issue where the very survival of certain members of the global community is clearly at stake — and where global security depends on coordinated global action — there must be no backsliding, no compromises, and no special cases allowed because of inability or unwillingness to honour global agreements for whatever reason.

Papua New Guinea is pleased to welcome our close island neighbours and very good friends from Tuvalu to membership of the United Nations.

What a terrible tragedy it would be if the international community were to fail them at the very time when they, together with other small island States — including countries which joined the United Nations last year — are assuming the responsibilities which go with becoming full participants in the Organization's affairs.

Certain security issues, such as climate change, require a global approach. So do efforts to limit the

proliferation that would bring about the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Global cooperation is the only means by which the international community can realistically hope to achieve the objective which the Secretary-General set for the Millennium Summit of ensuring that globalization becomes a positive force for people, instead of leaving them behind in squalor, especially in developing countries.

However, as the Secretary-General also suggested in his report (A/54/1) to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, different regions have different problems. Even similar problems in different settings may require different approaches. Security policies that work in one region may not work in others. The road to success can require complementary national, regional and global efforts.

Thus, Papua New Guinea is addressing the unwelcome spread of small arms and light weapons by imposing a complete ban on the issuance of new gun licenses. We support efforts to deal with the spread of illegally obtained or held arms through the Pacific Islands Forum.

We look to the forthcoming United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects to provide a global framework and global support for the efforts that individual States and regional organizations are taking to deal with the problem within their respective jurisdictions.

When it comes to the management of ocean resources, Papua New Guinea sees regional and interregional cooperation as complementary to measures designed to ensure the sustainable harvesting of fish in national waters.

We therefore welcome the agreement recently concluded under the auspices of the Multilateral High-level Conference on fisheries with the purpose of ensuring sustainable fishing for tuna and highly migratory species throughout their ranges in the Western and Central Pacific.

Papua New Guinea would also like to see both broader and deeper cooperation between coastal States in other aspects of oceans and ocean-bed management, including deep-sea mining.

In terms of regional cooperation, such cooperation is indispensable to dealing successfully with many important global and national issues. But regional cooperation can itself have a variety of different dimensions and employ different means.

In the South Pacific, for example, two of our closest neighbours, Fiji and Solomon Islands, are experiencing internal difficulties that have given rise to serious concern on the part of their friends.

We do not condone the illegal overthrow of democratic and constitutional Governments or other threats to the security of the Governments and citizens of other States, but, regrettably, and despite repeated efforts by previous Papua New Guinea Governments and other States, the main intra-regional body engaged in promoting regional cooperation in the South Pacific, the Pacific Islands Forum, does not have a mechanism for dealing promptly and effectively with challenges to the security of States in the region.

It has, therefore, been unable to arrange consultations, let alone facilitate a coordinated approach to the situations which have arisen following armed challenges to the Governments of Fiji and Solomon Islands. Some of our neighbours have responded by looking for support outside the region.

With the recent addition of six additional Pacific members to the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of States party to the Lome Convention, 14 Pacific island States now have access to a very practical mechanism for dealing with such situations.

The upshot is that, when Ministers and Ambassadors from Pacific ACP member States met in Cotonou, Benin, in June for the signing of the new framework agreement between the ACP and the European Union, we decided to set up a ministerial mission to report on the situations in Fiji and Solomon Islands.

In doing so, we were mindful of the need for, and grateful for the support of, the European Union.

The offer made by the French Minister for Economic Cooperation at the regional forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to ensure that the European Commission would defer making a final decision on sanctions until the Pacific ACP Ministerial Mission had reported was especially welcome because of the meaning and support it gave to our effort at regional cooperation.

The imposition of sanctions against a country can be a very blunt instrument indeed, causing innocent and powerless people to suffer at the same time as the powerful and influential, and sometimes disadvantaging them even more. Even so-called smart sanctions can have wide, unintended effects while leaving their objects largely unaffected.

When a small group of armed men try to take over a Government, imposing sanctions that affect innocent men, women and children can be not only ineffective but even counter-productive.

Sanctions might leave armed youths unaffected and in a position where they are even unable to appreciate, or are indifferent to, the wider consequences of their actions.

The underlying causes of inter-group tensions in Solomon Islands and the events which followed the attempted civilian armed coup in Fiji could be difficult to identify, and are beyond influence by sanctions.

It is, therefore, vital that serious difficulties such as those currently affecting Fiji and Solomon Islands be properly studied and carefully addressed.

Sometimes, the people best equipped to understand such situations and identify underlying causes are neighbours with similar cultures or other shared values.

In terms of the ACP Ministerial Mission, at the request of other Pacific ACP States, I have recently had the honour of leading the Pacific ACP Ministerial Mission to Fiji and Solomon Islands.

My colleagues included the Ministers for Foreign Affairs from Cook Islands, Mr. Robert Woonton, and Vanuatu, the Honourable Serge Vohor, as well as the Minister for Education from Samoa, the Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa.

With the active support of the Governments of both countries, we followed a crowded itinerary of meetings with the Prime Ministers, ministers and officials in Fiji and Solomon Islands, members of the previous Governments of both countries and business and trade union leaders, as well as a wide cross-section of other elements of civil society, including women's organizations. We were also able to interview victims in towns and rural areas, and to examine instances of destruction at first hand.

My colleagues and I are currently working on our report. We expect to present it to the European Commission, the ACP-EU Joint Assembly and other ACP, EU and joint bodies in October.

The commitment made by the French Minister for Economic Cooperation, whose country currently holds the presidency of the EU, means that the region — or, at least, our report — has been given the opportunity to influence events. The process on which we have embarked is, therefore, more meaningful than any existing alternative. We, the Pacific ACP members, offered to share our report with the Pacific Islands Forum, and the support our initiative has received from the region reflects our commitment to wider cooperation, not to mention our unwillingness to become involved in even the appearance of competition between rival regional bodies or groups.

The initiative has been welcomed and praised, both in the region and further afield. It sets an example which is worthy of close study both for the precedents it sets for cooperation among Pacific ACP States and as a possible model for similar efforts in other regions.

With regard to the Bougainville situation, Fiji and Solomon Islands are not the first States in our region to experience serious internal difficulties, though we pray not only that there will be real improvement very soon but that they will be the last States to experience such difficulties.

After more than eight years of armed conflict — from 1989 to 1997 — the part of Papua New Guinea known as Bougainville is now at peace. The progressive political settlement is moving ahead. The Lincoln Agreement on Peace, Security and Development on Bougainville commits the parties to peace-building on several levels, from weapons disposal and the re-establishment of civil authority, through reconciliation among former combatants to reconstruction of infrastructure, restoration of services, economic and social recovery and early resumption of the kinds of development which are part of the return of normalcy.

The national Government is committed to such a multidimensional approach. It is the way by which we hope to cooperate in building for a lasting peace by peaceful means. The priority which the Prime Minister gave the Bougainville peace process more than 12 months ago remains in place. Evidence of its continuing significance can be seen in the initiative he

has recently taken to meet key Bougainvillean demands within the framework of the Papua New Guinea Constitution.

The Government, which took the initiative in inviting our neighbours, Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Vanuatu, to set up the neutral, regional Peace Monitoring Group (PMG), values the contribution its unarmed personnel make to promoting mutual confidence on the ground. The PMG's success can be judged from the peaceful way in which it is now beginning to disengage by substantially reducing its size. The process needs greater support from the Bougainvillean parties so as to avoid the vacuum which has followed the departure of similar peacekeeping operations elsewhere, by cooperating in the re-establishment of policing, courts and correctional institutional services, as well as by strengthening the institutions at community level that help to maintain public order, dispense justice and uphold the rule of law.

As the initiator of the request for the United Nations observer mission in Bougainville, and as its host, Papua New Guinea appreciates the support which the Security Council and other organs of the United Nations provide for the Bougainville peace process. We are determined to keep on working for lasting peace by peaceful means within a flexible framework which will allow Bougainville a high degree of autonomy consistent with the integrity, security and sovereignty of the nation.

With regard to social and economic issues, as a developing country with 25 years of independence, Papua New Guinea is experiencing very great difficulty in improving national performance as measured by human development indicators. In some areas, our record is actually becoming worse. The current Government's five main objectives are intended to focus attention and effort where they are most needed. Our determination to pursue them is already making a very real difference, especially as far as economic management and the delivery of Government services are concerned.

Structural adjustment, including quite fundamental public sector reform, is one of the key means of bringing about often long-overdue change. We need the continuing support of our economic partners to succeed, including access to markets; increased investment in priority areas, such as downstream processing, which provides increased opportunities for productive employment; and aid on concessional terms. The recently concluded partnership agreement between the ACP countries and the EU is an example worthy of much wider emulation.

As a developing country that achieved independence only a quarter of a century ago, Papua New Guinea is firmly committed to the proper preparation for orderly decolonization. Impressed with the progress being made to implement the Noumea Accord, we continue to believe very strongly that the rights of the indigenous Kanaks of New Caledonia must be respected. Conscious of the consequences of other forms of decolonization, we welcome the re-emergence of East Timor as an independent entity. We look forward to receiving a delegation later this year to discuss how we might develop technical and other forms of mutually beneficial South-South cooperation.

Meanwhile, even as we continue to deepen and broaden cooperation with other Pacific island countries, we respect the integrity of our other neighbours and continue to benefit from the exchanges which flow from our status as a special observer at Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) meetings. In the broader arena of Asia-Pacific cooperation, we value our membership of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum and continue to work towards honouring the reciprocal commitments APEC members have made to liberalize markets. APEC includes some of our closest bilateral partners and friends. Common membership, and the process of developing economic ties with other APEC economies, do not detract from other aspects of Papua New Guinea's foreign relations. They do not affect the commitments we have made to such good friends as the People's Republic of China. We will not allow them to do so.

In conclusion, I should like to say that, 25 years after independence, Papua New Guinea has one of the longest unbroken records of constitutional and democratic government among countries that have become independent in the last 50 or so years. We have experienced difficulties, and had some near misses. The stresses and strains which have affected our system of Government have tested our strengths. In doing so, they have increased our understanding of countries experiencing serious internal difficulties — although not our sympathy for those who deliberately violate democratic principles or established constitutional

practices — while reinforcing our commitment to good governance, both at home and abroad.

Apart from the obvious consequences that this commitment has for Papua New Guinea's response to countries experiencing serious internal difficulties, including our preference for a positive, forward-looking approach and not negative sanctions, it also underlies our support for United Nations reform.

The reform must extend from improving administrative performance to making the Security Council more representative of United Nations Members as a whole. It must, in fact, extend to the performance of United Nations Members themselves, especially when it comes to paying their dues in a timely way and in full.

The millennium marks an important turning point in the calendar, and, because of my country's silver anniversary, in Papua New Guinea's history too. The United Nations is also at a critical turning point, with the Secretary-General drawing members' attention back to the original basis and focus among the people the Organization should serve.

The recent review of United Nations peace and security activities has produced an excellent report which challenges us to turn another corner and ensure that the increased responsibilities which the Organization has assumed since the end of the cold war help to keep and build peace in very different conditions.

I conclude by paying tribute to the vision which participants in the Millennium Summit have expressed on our behalf. In doing so, let me add that the real challenge we face is, emphatically, not to make more speeches, but to turn their wise words into practical forms of cooperation which help us achieve common purposes without sacrificing the diversity which is the basis of our need and ability to engage in global self-help.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.

Mr. Syed Hamid (Malaysia): I join other speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. I am confident that with your vast experience and diplomatic skills you will be able to guide the proceedings of this Assembly to a successful conclusion.

I would also like to express my delegation's gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for the effective manner in which he guided the work of the last session of the General Assembly.

Let me also take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General for his great dedication to the Organization and the many contributions he has made in the service of the international community.

There are great expectations on the part of the international community that in the new century the United Nations will be a more effective Organization. Indeed, its continued relevance, especially to the developing countries, which comprise the majority of the membership of the United Nations, will, to a large degree, depend on their perception that it is attuned to their concerns and responsive to their needs. The Organization must continue to serve the interests of all its Members, big or small, strong or weak. It must be more transparent and democratic in its decision-making processes and work methods.

In this context, the reform and restructuring of the Organization continues to be a matter of great importance. Much has been done through the process of reform effected by the Secretary-General, but reform is a continuous and ongoing process and should continue to be vigorously pursued to ensure the United Nations increased effectiveness and efficiency, especially in facing up to the challenges of the new century. As modernization of the Organization entails additional resources, the critical issue of financing the United Nations must also be seriously addressed and resolved as soon as possible.

More intensified efforts should be made to bring to conclusion the deliberations on one of the most important aspects of the reform process: the restructuring of the Security Council. Clearly, the necessary compromises must be made if the ongoing deliberations on the reform of the Council are to make any progress at all. We look forward to your leadership, Mr. President, in unblocking the current impasse so that this important organ of the United Nations can be fully revamped, modernized and made more effective. Malaysia continues to support expansion of the Council in both categories of its membership. Any expansion in the permanent category should include both the industrialized and the developing countries. If there is

no agreement on expansion of the permanent membership, the Council should be enlarged for the time being in the non-permanent category.

A central objective of reform of the Security Council should be to ensure its effectiveness in the maintenance of international peace and security. Equally important is the need to enhance the Council's unity of purpose among its members, especially the permanent members, so as to avoid the situation that necessitated the taking of international action outside the Council by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as in the case of Kosovo, when the Council was unable to act. Notwithstanding the special circumstances of Kosovo, future international interventions should be made only with the express approval of the Security Council, in the interest of preserving the role and authority of the Council as enshrined in the Charter, as well as of ensuring the legality and legitimacy of all such actions.

Another aspect of the work of the Security Council that should be thoroughly reviewed relates to the imposition of sanctions on Member States, which have often brought untold suffering on the general populace, particularly women and children. Sanction regimes of the future should be established only when absolutely necessary and should be specifically targeted, time-bound, subject to regular review and lifted when no longer necessary. The interests of all parties to the conflict should be addressed in order to achieve a just and lasting peace. We have seen too many conflicts that seem to be resolved on paper but continue to remain outstanding on the ground.

We should strive in the new century to make our world a safer place. We should strive to get rid of weapons of mass destruction — particularly nuclear weapons, but also chemical and biological weapons. We must intensify global efforts to reduce existing stocks of these horrendous weapons, culminating in their total elimination. The major Powers and others that possess and manufacture these weapons bear a special responsibility. We should all play our part in ensuring that there is no let-up in the global efforts towards nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

We should also limit the production and deployment of ultra-sophisticated, high technology conventional weapons, many of which are being used in the wars of developing countries, resulting in the ironic situation of third world countries fighting their wars with first world weapons, thanks to the aggressive marketing efforts of arms vendors of the developed countries. The developing countries can ill afford the arms race that this will trigger, nor the huge defence expenditures to sustain the use of these weapons.

We must ensure that genocide, "ethnic cleansing" and other crimes against humanity that were perpetrated, for instance, in Rwanda, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, are never allowed to be committed again anywhere else in the world. More strenuous efforts should be made to apprehend indicted war criminals so as to send a stern warning to others. They should not be allowed to get away with their heinous crimes with impunity.

Undoubtedly, the maintenance of international peace and security can be better served through more effective use of preventive diplomacy. This has been highlighted by the Secretary-General in his Millennium Report (A/54/2000) and should be seriously considered.

The Organization will have to develop a more effective early-warning capability and deal with emerging conflict situations through more effective use of the mechanism of preventive diplomacy. A more proactive approach in preventive diplomacy would require even closer coordination and collaboration between the Security Council and the Secretary-General, who would have to put his good offices role to even greater use.

However, that should not become an excuse to impose anything on Member States or to interfere in their internal affairs. There are growing tendencies for the developed countries, in the name of civil society, democracy and human rights, to set standards in accordance with their own moulds for the developing countries to follow. We even ignore the fact that many of the problems confronting the developing countries are the vestiges of the colonial past. We want to leave yesterday behind and move to today and the future, but the pace appropriate to the particular country concerned should be followed.

United Nations peacekeeping operations should be empowered with clear and well-defined mandates, adequate resources and strong international support, irrespective of where they take place. There should be no perception of selectivity in their launching. In this regard, it is especially important that peacekeeping operations in Africa — notably in Sierra Leone, the

Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia and Eritrea — be strongly supported by the international community. At the same time, for peace to be viable it is essential that peacekeeping missions incorporate the necessary elements of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, with the necessary support of the international community.

My delegation commends the frank and forthright report (A/55/305) of the Brahimi Panel on United Nations Peace Operations. The Panel's bold recommendations deserve the detailed and careful consideration of the membership of the Organization. Thereafter, we must demonstrate the urgency, seriousness and political will to follow up on those laudable recommendations, lest the Panel's report meet the fate of many United Nations reports in the past for lack of the necessary political will.

On another conflict situation, it is a matter of great concern to Malaysia that one of the longest-running conflicts of this century, the Arab-Israeli conflict, remains unresolved. Successive opportunities were not grasped due to the lack of seriousness on the part of the Israeli Government to pursue the path of peace. We are disappointed that the Israeli Government fails to live up to the expectations of the international community and lacks the boldness of vision, as well as the will and courage, to grasp the once-in-a-lifetime window of opportunity to seal a lasting peace between Israel and Palestine and Syria in the interest of regional peace and security.

The aspirations of the Palestinian people for an independent and sovereign homeland can no longer be denied. We look forward to welcoming in the very near future an independent State of Palestine among the community of nations here at the United Nations, as well as in other international organizations. Equally, we look forward to the return of Syrian Golan without further delay. Israel must bury the suspicion and distrust of the past and look to the future in an environment that will create opportunities and challenges in a peaceful and stable Middle East.

Since the East Asian financial crisis there has been increasing recognition of the nature of the problem of, and the need for reform of, the existing global financial and economic systems, which Malaysia has strongly advocated. It is my hope that efforts in that direction will continue to be pursued by the Bretton Woods institutions, even if the worst for the affected Asian economies may now be over and those countries are now recovering. It is dismaying that some quarters are suggesting that, with the end of the crisis, there is now no urgency or even necessity for reform. Given the universality of its membership, the United Nations is well placed to make an important contribution to promoting the reform process, particularly in the context of its own increasing dialogue and interaction with those institutions. It would be the height of folly and irresponsibility to wait for another round of speculative currency attacks to jolt us into action.

East Asia's traumatic experience is also a strong reminder of the negative effects of globalization on developing countries. While globalization is inevitable and is becoming a permanent feature of the new international order and system, it is far from being a panacea. Indeed, the United Nations *Human Development Report* indicates that globalization has led to the marginalization of many developing countries, resulting in an increasing disparity in economic attainment between nations. This conclusion is not surprising, given the existing inequitable international economic order and the differing access to technology.

With all its potential benefits, globalization in its unfettered form is likely to do more harm than good to the small, vulnerable economies, at least in the short and medium terms, unless measures are put in place to protect them. It will bring about not free trade, but an unfair and inequitable exchange: the inflow of capital, goods and services from the developed North in return for the outflow of hard-earned foreign exchange from the poor countries of the South. The notion of a level playing field, which is the central creed of globalization, would perpetuate the present inequities in favour of the strong, developed economies at the expense of the vulnerable economies of the developing world. It would only ensure the continued domination of the weak by the strong.

For globalization to be universally embraced without reservation there must be in place certain ground rules to regulate the conduct of free trade in goods and services to ensure an equitable exchange between unequal partners predicated on a win-win proposition. At the same time, the principle of transparency should be applied across the board to include currency traders and market manipulators, who are now somehow exempted from such a requirement,

as well as from payment of taxes. Until and unless these measures are instituted, globalization will be seen by the developing world as a largely predatory ideology of the rich nations for the exploitation and subjugation of poor ones.

That impression is further reinforced by the intolerance of dissenting of some of its promoters views in their zeal to prescribe the one-size-fits-all approach towards globalization. The developing countries should be allowed to pursue globalization at their own pace so as to enable them to develop social and institutional structures to fully benefit from the process while minimizing its negative impact. For many countries, the price to be paid for globalization as presently interpreted, particularly the loss of independence, would be simply too great for them to bear. This is not the time for us to re-examine the concept of the nation State and the sovereignty of nations in order to accommodate the needs of the giant multinational companies that operate across borders.

In the meantime, in order to brace themselves for the full impact of globalization, developing countries must forge enhanced cooperation among themselves in a true spirit of South-South cooperation and on the basis of mutually beneficial "smart partnerships" with the involvement of the private sector. This would facilitate a useful exchange of ideas and experience among them on the globalization process. Malaysia is pleased to share those ideas and experiences with its partners from the developing countries, and has done so in the past several years in the context of the Langkawi international dialogue. We are pleased to see that those dialogues have been emulated by Africa through the South African international dialogue. Indeed, in an increasingly complex future world it is only appropriate for the developing countries to develop such synergies through strategic linkages among themselves as well as with the developed countries.

To assist in the process of globalization, it is incumbent upon the international community to ensure that the developing countries, particularly the least developed among them, continue to receive development assistance to enable them to make the leap out of chronic poverty. Indeed, given the intrinsic link between peace, security and development, the Organization must continue to be in the vanguard of global developmental efforts, upon which so much of the world depends. It is imperative for the United Nations to carry out its developmental mission with even greater vigour at a time of increasingly scarce resources and exploding populations. This is where the continued role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) can be especially critical, with additional resources and more effective programmes, particularly for vulnerable small island and landlocked States and States in Africa, where in a number of cases economic performance has fallen back rather than progressed since independence.

Notable gains have been made in several African countries. However, Africa's ability to rise out of chronic poverty can be attained only with continued international assistance, including forgiveness of its countries' external debt, without which many of them will remain trapped in the vicious circle of poverty, violence and natural or man-made disasters. In this regard, Malaysia reiterates its strong support for, and looks forward to, the convening of an international conference on financing for development in the year 2001 involving all major stakeholders, including the private sector. The convening of such a forum is imperative, as there can be no development without the necessary financing to support it.

Along with the Millennium Summit, this session of the General Assembly will be remembered for, among other things, paving the way for the kind of United Nations that will eventually emerge to serve the international community, at least in the early decades of the twenty-first century. While the shifting patterns of relationships among nations have yet to find a final form and the future is far from clear, there is no denying that in the increasingly complex and interconnected world of tomorrow, the United Nations is likely to play an increasingly critical role. To that end the Organization must continuously place itself at the forefront in the search for solutions to global problems.

The President: I give the floor to the Minister of State and Foreign Affairs of Portugal, His Excellency Mr. Jaime Gama.

Mr. Gama (Portugal) *(spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation):* It is with the greatest pleasure that I congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of this Millennium Assembly. I pay tribute also to the outgoing President, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, and reiterate to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, my praise for his vision and

for the remarkable and courageous manner in which he is carrying out his duties.

My French colleague has already addressed the Assembly on behalf of the 15 member States of the European Union, a statement with which my country fully associates itself.

I will now touch upon questions of particular importance to my country, Portugal.

As the Prime Minister stated here during the Millennium Summit, the United Nations finds itself at a turning point which necessarily calls for the exercise of reflection on the future of the Organization. In this era of increasing globalization, we should give the United Nations the means to accomplish the missions that we have entrusted it with, turning the Organization into the foundation of a more stable, united and cohesive international community.

The international community faces three great challenges at the turn of the millennium: to strengthen our action on behalf of peace, to contribute to the eradication of extreme poverty, and to guarantee environmental conditions conducive to perpetuating life on earth.

The increasing use of peacekeeping operations over the last decade, which we have encouraged, conclusively demonstrates their importance. The results that we have obtained on the five continents tell us with certainty that we have chosen the right path. To continue this effort effectively, the United Nations must have at its disposal the necessary resources, be they financial, technical, civilian, political or military.

A credible peacekeeping capacity is in itself a deterrent to conflicts and therefore an integral part of the global system of conflict prevention, of which the United Nations should be an essential component. In this regard, Portugal welcomed with satisfaction the Brahimi report on peace operations. We believe that its list of recommendations point the way to a process of reform that will strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace-building. We should take advantage of the momentum that has been created and concentrate on obtaining concrete results within the next year or two.

I would stress, however, that crucial questions will always be of a political nature. We must muster the necessary courage to broaden the scope of the responsibilities of the United Nations. Let us not deceive ourselves. As the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, stated, it is our function to intervene. Allow me to go ever further and to say that it is our duty to do so — to intervene in time, effectively and on the basis of international law.

Portugal is ready to do so, as it has shown in the past. We have participated in peacekeeping operations in Mozambique, Angola, the Central African Republic and Guatemala, and today we are participating in United Nations missions in East Timor, Bosnia, Kosovo and the Western Sahara, with more than 1,000 peacekeepers. Portugal is currently the 11th-largest contributor to the United Nations peacekeeping operations, and first among its European Union partners.

During the Portuguese presidency of the European Union, we gave decisive impetus to the creation of the European Union's capacities to intervene, which we see as being offered in the service of international peace and cooperation. In the year 2003, the Union will have at its disposal a force of 50,000 to 60,000 military personnel, to which 5,000 police will be added, as well as a civilian structure for crisis management.

This aspect of Portugal's external activities will continue to be favoured, and the importance we attach to them is equally reflected in our candidacy for the presidency of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for the year 2002.

In a globalized world, the existence of tremendous economic asymmetries is a factor of permanent tension and conflict. Indeed, about half of the world's population lives on less than $2 a day.

The turn of the millennium is an opportunity for us to reaffirm our will to combat and eradicate poverty on a global scale. It may be a utopian vision at this point, but with our combined efforts it is a goal that may be within our reach.

In the time that it takes to deliver each of these statements in the General Assembly, around 300 children under the age of 1 will die. Is this acceptable? Obviously not. Could it be, then, that the human and financial resources necessary to fight this tragedy are so great that they force us into accepting it? The answer again is no. Many of those deaths could be avoided through better management and without an

increase in resources. Health, like education, should be a priority sector for development assistance.

It is vital to combine efforts, policies and instruments. Direct development assistance must be complemented by mechanisms to resolve the longstanding problems of the poorest countries through reform of the regulatory institutions of the global financial and economic system and through agreements that allow poor countries to access the markets of developed countries without trade barriers.

I should like to stress in particular the importance of developing cooperative mechanisms between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, namely a revitalized Economic and Social Council. Our priority should be to redefine the role of each institution and to avoid any duplication of effort in a field where the United Nations should play a leading role.

It is equally important to give responsibility to the countries receiving aid by demanding that funds be used efficiently or requiring good governance. In this regard I should like to emphasize that the fight against corruption should be a priority of all our Governments.

The Millennium Declaration states clearly that the principal challenge today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive reality for the entire population of the world, and not a new factor of exclusion.

Only the United Nations is in a position to promote the partnership for change that Kofi Annan referred to in his report entitled "We the peoples".

Poverty, sadly, is also closely linked to infection and to contagious diseases such as AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, which cause millions of deaths every year and which, in Africa, are laying waste to an entire generation and posing a tragic threat to future development. More than ever before, it is vital to mobilize the energies of civil society, institutions and the international community at large to fight infection and contagious diseases. The European Union and the United States recently agreed, at Lisbon, to strengthen their cooperation in the fight against those scourges.

Turning to the environment, we must always be mindful of the fact that economic growth and progress must not be achieved at any cost, least of all at the cost of the future. The United Nations must continue to guide the way on environmental matters, as it has since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. But the response from States has fallen short — often very short — of what we committed ourselves to do in political statements and even in international treaties. Let us not delude ourselves: the United Nations plays an instrumental role in this crucial, strategic area, as was reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration, but it is only States that can produce results. This is not a job that can be subcontracted to the United Nations.

Here, civil society should use all its influence, by bringing pressure to bear on and calling to account, Governments that think they can deal with environmental issues by opting out, as though they were simply matters of sovereignty. We can no longer think in that way. Global warming affects us all. To face this common problem, we need common action on a global scale.

For geographical, historical and political reasons, Portugal is a country that is linked to the oceans. For that reason, we recognize their importance both to the land ecosystem and to the renewal of energy resources vital to the sustenance of millions of people. We welcome the launching of an informal consultative process on the oceans and the law of the sea, and we attach particular importance to the debate on scientific research on marine matters.

Let me speak briefly about an initiative to which my country attaches great importance. In June, at Warsaw, a group of more than 100 countries, united by shared beliefs, endorsed a declaration entitled "Towards a Community of Democracies". The participants recognized that there was no single model to determine how the will of a people should be respected. The Community of Democracies will play a role in uniting the efforts of all countries that believe a representative democratic system to be the system that best meets that objective.

I wish now to speak of some regional matters that are of particular importance to my country. Africa is one of the great priorities of Portuguese foreign policy. The first Africa-Europe Summit was held during the Portuguese presidency of the European Union, and on the basis of a Portuguese proposal. The Summit opened new vistas in the relationship between Europe and Africa which will surely make possible a joint process of reflection on the challenges and problems that the

two continents face. The second Africa-Europe Summit will be held at Lisbon in 2003.

West Africa is at present one of our main concerns on the continent. In that connection I would mention the situation in Casamance in Senegal; the recent conflict in Guinea-Bissau, from which the country is only now beginning to recover; the serious conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia; the problem of refugees from those countries and their consequences for Guinea; and the instability along the borders of all those countries.

The persistence and potential spread of those tensions and conflicts seriously threaten the security of the entire subregion of West Africa, which could have grave political, economic and humanitarian consequences. It is therefore necessary for the international community to give greater attention to this sensitive region of Africa while there is still time.

With respect to Angola, we deeply regret the fact that the war is continuing, which we believe is due to the lack of implementation of the Bicesse and Lusaka peace agreements, and to UNITA's violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. In our view, those instruments continue to be the reference point for a political solution to the Angolan conflict. We welcome the strengthening of the sanctions regime against UNITA and reiterate our pledge to cooperate with the Security Council's sanctions Committee. We consider that the presence of the United Nations on Angolan territory continues to be of fundamental importance, from both a humanitarian and a political perspective. Only thus can the United Nations quickly step in to support any political solution that may emerge. I welcome the intention of the Angolan Government to organize elections and to hold them in 2001. Promotion of the values of tolerance and dialogue and of democratic principles is essential to guarantee a lasting peace.

One year after the referendum that allowed the people of East Timor finally to exercise their right to self-determination, the United Nations faces a new challenge: administering East Timor in its transitional period and creating the necessary foundations for a new independent and democratic State that will be a future member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations and of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries — and that we hope can be admitted to membership of the United Nations by 2001. Portugal has always supported East Timor and will continue to do so. Our total financial assistance, not counting our participation in the military component of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, will reach an estimated $50 million this year, and will remain at that level in 2001 and 2002. Much remains to be done, but the able leadership of Sergio Vieira de Mello and the exceptional qualities of Xanana Gusmão allow us to look to the future with optimism.

The tragic events that took place in Atambua on 6 September, in which three members of the staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees lost their lives, deserve unanimous condemnation by the international community. They testify to the impunity with which the militias act in West Timor. Two days after those events, further militia activity took place along the border, which led to the death of 11 people, this time of Indonesian nationality, who were assisting various non-governmental organizations and international organizations. We welcome the swift response of the Security Council in adopting its resolution 1319 (2000) and in deciding to dispatch an evaluation mission to West Timor.

The new democratic Government of Indonesia has, in general, shown a spirit of cooperation. It is now time for it to honour its commitment to re-establish law and order in West Timor, disarming and dismantling its militias. Their continued existence destabilizes the transition process in East Timor and is an affront to the civilian and military authorities of Indonesia, disturbing the consolidation of the democratic regime in that country. For our part, we stand ready to work with the Indonesian Government, helping it to resolve this problem. It was in that spirit that the Portuguese Prime Minister proposed here last week a stability pact for East Timor. It is in that spirit that we will participate in the quadripartite summit to be held soon at Jakarta, which will bring together high-level representatives of Indonesia, East Timor, Australia and Portugal.

Guaranteeing peace, fighting poverty, protecting the environment and leaving a better world for future generations: that is our duty at the turn of the millennium. Only through democracy can Governments respond to those aspirations of our societies. Only a reformed and ever more democratic United Nations will be able to help us face this common challenge.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Iceland, His Excellency Mr. Halldór Ásgrímsson.

Mr. Ásgrímsson (Iceland): Allow me, Sir, at the outset to congratulate you heartily on your election to the Presidency of this General Assembly. Finland is a close friend and partner within the Nordic community. We wish you success with this challenging task and pledge to you the full support of the Icelandic delegation.

The Millennium Declaration provides the commitments of the world community in the new century. To prevent conflicts, maintain international peace and security and make peace an achievable goal at the end of armed conflicts, we need to continue strengthening the United Nations and the international legal system as a whole. Iceland has always supported verifiable arms control and arms reduction measures and will continue to support realistic disarmament proposals aiming at maximum security with a minimum of weapons. It is appalling to note the enormous sums being spent on weapons, while the money could be used to significantly improve the lives of millions.

Today, when there is an obvious need to assess the United Nations ability to conduct peacekeeping operations, it has proved extremely important to have a Secretary-General who has such a deep knowledge of the matter through his own experience. I would like to commend the Secretary-General for taking the initiative to ask a panel of pro minent experts in the field to assess the situation. I welcome the Brahimi report. Its recommendations should be implemented as soon as possible.

Even though my country does not have a military, it has been able to participate in peacekeeping operations. It has done so in the Balkans by providing medical staff, policemen and experts in the fields of law, the media and women's rights. We have noted with interest the recommendations made in the Brahimi report concerning the non-military aspects of peace operations. We will be studying them carefully now that we are in the process of looking into how we can strengthen our contribution to peacekeeping in the future.

The report states that expressions of general support in the form of statements and resolutions must be followed up with tangible actions. We will be taking these words of wisdom seriously in our policy-making.

In the preparations for the Millennium Assembly, the Secretary-General encouraged Member States to engage more effectively in the international legal framework by acceding to a number of legal instruments. One to which Iceland has decided to accede is the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

The Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Unfortunately, it has not succeeded in reflecting the tremendous changes in the international arena which have taken place since its establishment. In order to ensure its credibility in years to come, the reform process has to be accelerated.

The rules of international law governing the relations between States are now well established; this also applies in the fields of human rights and humanitarian law. These rules set out the rights and obligations of States and individuals. But ground rules do not suffice if it is not possible to enforce them. There are mechanisms to ensure respect and compliance with these rules, such as the General Assembly, the Security Council and peacekeeping missions. As a complement to these mechanisms, an effective international court system should be available to bring those who breach these rules to justice, at the same time serving to deter potential perpetrators.

With this in mind, I believe that the greatest achievements towards strengthening the international legal system in recent years have been the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunals for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and for Rwanda and the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Iceland has ratified the Rome Statute and encourages all other States to do so.

I welcome the proposal to include cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe in the agenda of this session of the General Assembly. I had the honour of chairing the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe last year. I am therefore well aware of the important contribution made by the Council to peace and stability in Europe, especially in the field of human rights. The United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Council of Europe and other organizations

responded to the serious situation in the Balkans by joining forces and working together to make reconstruction achievable.

In Kosovo, the politically motivated and inter-ethnic violence must be stopped. Rogue elements cannot be allowed to destroy possibilities created by the international community. One ethnic group must not be allowed to win at the expense of another. The Kosovars have been provided with a unique opportunity to build a just community in the region — a community where the fundamental freedoms and rights of every individual and minority group are respected. Only by utilizing this opportunity are Kosovars going to be able to build a stable foundation for lasting peace and stability for future generations. The same can be said about similar situations elsewhere in the Balkans, such as in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The international community has taken on an enormous task in building a whole new civic structure within Kosovo. The development of a legal system and free media have been two challenging tasks. The elections to take place in October are also going to be challenging. Hopefully, they can be carried out in an orderly and peaceful manner.

It is very important to include women in the political process. In this respect, I would like to commend the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for the good work carried out in Kosovo, not only in the political field but also in fighting violence against women and in promoting women's participation in economic activities.

The importance of human rights in securing long-term stability and security, both within and between countries, cannot be overestimated. It is therefore essential that no compromises be accepted in this field, and our aims should remain high.

The Security Council should be commended for discussing the grave humanitarian crisis and security threat posed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, and also for discussing the issue of children and armed conflict. The discussion in the Council has served to concentrate the attention of the international community on these issues and led the way for others to take the measures required. Both issues affect children in a very serious manner. I expect them to feature prominently on the agenda of next year's special session to follow up the World Summit for Children. I also welcome the decision to hold a special session of the General Assembly on the enormous problem of HIV/AIDS and international efforts to combat it.

The rights of women were significantly enhanced with the adoption last year of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Iceland has signed the Protocol and is preparing its ratification.

I cannot fail to condemn the terrible plight of those women around the world who are still enduring major human rights abuses, including female genital mutilation and trafficking, as well as severe restrictions on their freedom of movement and the right to work.

During the Millennium Summit, the Prime Minister of Iceland signed the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Iceland welcomes their adoption and hopes that they will further secure the human rights of children.

We have to put extra effort into working towards the elimination of racial discrimination. It is worrying to note the trend towards increasing racism and xenophobia in certain parts of the world, including Europe. This needs to be fought at all levels. The World Conference to be held in South Africa next year will without doubt play an important role. Iceland welcomes this Conference and feels that, in the light of history, South Africa is a very appropriate venue for it.

As reflected in the report of the Secretary-General, "We the peoples", fighting poverty remains one of the main challenges to the United Nations. People living in poverty do not have the opportunity to exercise many of their fundamental rights and freedoms. They cannot benefit from the possibilities of globalization. We need to reverse the current trend, as decided at the Millennium Summit. But more needs to be done. Globalization and new technologies offer many opportunities to reduce poverty at a faster rate than in the past.

We have been strengthening our development cooperation, both bilaterally and multilaterally. At the bilateral level, we have concentrated on a group of African countries with a focus on strengthening their fishing industry and education and health areas, with the potential to positively alter the lives of people in need. On the multilateral level, we will be contributing to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative

through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Most of our decisions are based on compromises, in which each and every one of us has to give a little in order to reach an agreement. It is very important to keep this in mind, not only when we discuss substance, but also when the time comes for us to pay our dues, both to the regular budget and to the peacekeeping budget. It is crucial for the good functioning of this Organization that all Members pay their contributions fully, on time and without any conditions.

In recent years, the oceans of the world have received increased attention in the General Assembly. We welcome this development. Iceland's economy is based on the sustainable harvest of living marine resources. The health and responsible stewardship of the oceans are therefore of critical importance to us. Last year, we resolved to improve United Nations coordination in the area of ocean affairs. Towards that end, we established an Informal Consultative Process to discuss the Secretary-General's report on the oceans and the law of the sea. I was pleased with the implementation of this decision of the first Meeting of this Process last spring.

However, we must act carefully when seeking to improve our coordination and cooperation in this area. Ocean issues must be addressed at the appropriate level and be consistent with the rights and obligations laid down in the Convention on the Law of the Sea. We must fully respect the sovereign right of States over their natural resources and the competence of existing international organizations. Above all, the integrity of the Convention must be preserved. We must be mindful that the Convention provides the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out.

The United Nations specialized agencies have an important role to play in promoting the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans. A key area in this respect is marine scientific research. We need more accurate and policy-oriented information on the state of the oceans. Coordination towards that end would be a worthy task for the new Informal Consultative Process on Ocean Affairs.

At the onset of a new millennium, it is more pressing than ever before to ensure the access of people in the developing countries, especially in rural areas, to readily available and sustainable energy. Today, about one third of the world's population does not have such access, and this situation is obviously a serious obstacle to the development of these communities. In my country, we have been able to bring sustainable energy to all households in the country. We are sharing our experience and knowledge with the developing countries through the United Nations University Geothermal Training Programme, which is located in Iceland and funded by my Government.

The 1992 Earth Summit in Rio created a momentum for building a secure future for humankind and life on Earth under the banner of sustainable development. Soon, world leaders will meet again at a global conference to take stock of the progress made in meeting these challenges, laid down in Agenda 21 and the other Rio agreements. It is indeed true that we have not been able to live up to all the expectations raised in Rio, but we should not fail to acknowledge the progress that we have made.

The concept of sustainable development has truly become accepted as a fundamental guiding strategy in environmental and socio-economic affairs. In my own country, which is dependent on fisheries, we believe that we are reaping the benefits of the sustainable-use regime for our fish stocks in the form of a healthy ecosystem and a robust economy. Regional and international efforts to prevent the pollution of the oceans have continued to gather strength and we can expect further efforts, in particular to control pollution from land-based sources.

It is my belief that, in charting a course for the future, we should be looking at success stories and learning from them, rather than concentrating on the obstacles we face. Let us be guided by the doers, but not the doom-sayers.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Rashid Abdullah Al-Noaimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Noaimi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to convey to you, on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, our sincere congratulations and regards on your election to the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that your experience in international affairs will contribute to the success of this session's proceedings. We also thank your predecessor, His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, for the efficient manner in which

he directed the work of the previous session. I would also like to express our appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his prudent leadership and for the efforts he exerts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in maintaining peace, security and stability in the world.

The convening of the Millennium Summit a few days ago in this world forum was a clear embodiment of the political will of the leaders of the world to deal effectively with the problems and challenges that face the international community, such as the proliferation of proscribed weapons, armed conflicts and increasing poverty and debt, as well as other attendant transnational issues, such as drugs, organized crime, international terrorism, environmental pollution, persistent violations of human rights and the disparities resulting from globalization and information technology.

The consequences of these prevailing conditions have, more than ever before, reinforced our awareness of the importance of adhering to the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and of consolidating the rule of international law through the peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for the principle of equality and the right to self-determination, as well as of strengthening the spirit of cooperation and tolerance among the different cultures, beliefs and legacies of the various civilizations, for achieving the desired security, stability and human development.

The United Arab Emirates reiterates its welcome of the border treaties concluded between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and both the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Yemen, as an important political and historic event that will promote confidence-building measures and good neighbourly relations. At the same time, we call upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to follow the example of those fraternal States and to respond to our peaceful initiatives that call for either entering into direct and serious bilateral negotiations aimed at finding a peaceful solution for ending Iran's occupation of our three islands Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, or agreeing to submit the dispute to the International Court of Justice.

In this context, we would like to reaffirm that all actions and measures taken unilaterally by the Islamic Republic of Iran on those three islands and its continued construction of military and civilian installations on them, are illegal measures considered null and void, and do not establish or entail any legal rights, regardless of the duration of the occupation. In fact, they represent a violation of the territorial sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates and contravene the principles and purposes of the Charters of both the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, as well as declared Iranian peaceful intentions in the region.

More than a year has elapsed since the Gulf Cooperation Council entrusted a tripartite Ministerial Committee, composed of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Qatar, with developing a mechanism for direct negotiations between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran has not yet responded to any of the endeavours of that Committee, thus preventing the reinforcement of the foundations of peace and security in the Arab Gulf region.

Despite the fact that almost ten years have elapsed since the end of the second Gulf War, the Arab Gulf region is still experiencing the negative effects of that War. Consequently, it is imperative that political and diplomatic efforts continue in order to find a peaceful solution that would lead to ending the human suffering of the Iraqi people. At the same time, we invite the Iraqi Government to cooperate by completely fulfilling its obligations, particularly those relating to the release of Kuwaiti and other countries' prisoners of war or detainees and to the restitution of Kuwaiti property, in implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council. In this regard, we would like to underline the importance of respecting the national sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of both Iraq and Kuwait, as well as refraining from the threat or use of force, in order to ensure the entrenchment of security and stability in the region.

The Middle East peace process recently witnessed important developments during which major efforts were exerted with the objective of arriving at equitable and fair solutions based on the resolutions of international legitimacy and the principle of land for peace. Yet, despite all those efforts and all the flexible and constructive proposals put forward by the Palestinian side for finding a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestine issue in all its aspects, the Israeli Government persisted in its positions of procrastination, delay and stalling, and in failing to

abide by the agreements it had concluded with the Palestinian side.

Thus, in affirming our position of solidarity with the fraternal Palestinian people and their leadership, represented by the Palestinian Authority, we renew our call to the co-sponsors of the peace process — in particular the United States of America — and the other active States to continue exerting political and diplomatic efforts that support and promote negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, with the aim of finding a just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestine issue. In particular this settlement should resolve the issues of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the refugees, on the basis of Security Council resolutions, especially resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). This should enable the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate and inalienable rights to return to their homeland and to establish their own independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Also in this context we reaffirm our unceasing support of the position of sisterly Syria in its efforts to regain its Golan territory up to the line of 4 June 1967. We call on the international community to demand that Israel resume negotiations on the Syrian track on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, in the interest of attaining peace, stability and growth for all the States and peoples of the region.

The United Arab Emirates, in welcoming once again fraternal Lebanon's regaining of its territory, expresses support for Lebanon's efforts to complete the extension of its sovereignty over all of its national soil.

In the same vein, we support the demands of sisterly Libya that the economic sanctions imposed on it be lifted, particularly since it has implemented relevant Security Council resolutions.

We also express our satisfaction at the outcome of the recent Somali reconciliation conference in Djibouti and invite all Somali factions to reinforce national unity for the sake of restoring peace, stability and sustainable development to Somalia and the rest of the region of the Horn of Africa.

The growing number of problems resulting from the continuation of wars, disputes and ethnic cleansing in some parts of the African continent, the Balkans, South Asia, Afghanistan and other places is a source of constant concern for the international community. Consequently, we support all regional and international efforts aimed at dealing with these issues by peaceful means, and we emphasize that just and lasting resolution of these issues cannot be attained until the parties concerned demonstrate the necessary political will to achieve national reconciliation and demonstrate their commitment to implement relevant Security Council resolutions.

Despite international unanimity, shown in the Disarmament Conference and other international forums, regarding the need to limit the spread of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, progress in this field remains slow, which is a matter of concern to us. We are particularly concerned at this time as some States are striving to outdo each other in stockpiling certain classes of these weapons, in particular nuclear arms and ballistic missiles, as a means of settling their territorial disputes. Since such actions escalate conflicts and disrupt the strategic security balance, at both the regional and international levels, we call upon the States concerned to review their policies in this respect and to promote the establishment of zones that are free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, especially in the Middle East, the Arab Gulf and the Indian Ocean. We also urge the international community to demand once again that the Israeli Government accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and agree to subject its nuclear facilities to International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

Despite the multidimensional changes that the world economy is witnessing as a result of the deregulation of markets, globalization and modern technology, the economic and social gap between the developed and developing States still exists and is growing — thereby exacerbating poverty and unemployment, environmental degradation and debt accumulation. Thus, the convening of the Millennium Summit and the Summit's Declaration highlight the great importance our countries attach to these issues. This makes it incumbent on all of us to work assiduously on carrying out the commitments and undertakings contained therein regarding the creation of an environment favourable to development, elimination of poverty and free access for the exports of the least developed countries to the markets of industrialized countries. I confirm the determination of the United Arab Emirates to support this plan and to

work towards narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor.

The United Arab Emirates continues its sustained efforts in support of economic- and social-development projects in many countries of the world, particularly in Africa and Asia, be it through direct participation in financing such projects or by supporting international and regional efforts to attain those goals.

Finally, the ever-increasing burden of economic, social and human development, which is the first safeguard of the political stability that we desire, demands that mechanisms for regional and international cooperation, foremost among which is the United Nations, be created. Hence, we call for continued efforts to carry out the structural reform and development of the world Organization, in particular the Security Council and the General Assembly, so that the Organization can keep pace with the rapid changes in international relations.

The President: I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, His Excellency Felipe Pérez Roque.

Mr. Roque (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are living at a decisive moment in the history of humankind. More than half a century after the creation of the United Nations, on the threshold of a new millennium that was supposed to herald an era of peace among men, solidarity among nations and greater well-being for the poorest people, we are confronted instead by the most serious and complex economic, social, political and environmental crisis in the history of the human race.

The expectations of peace, stability and cooperation that the end of the cold war triggered throughout the world are far from becoming a reality. The emergence of a unipolar world in which a single super-Power is capable of militarily controlling the international scene, far from meaning greater security for our peoples, has ushered in a new stage in which the hegemonism of that sole super-Power prevails — direct or covert interventionism under the guise of multilateral actions, insecurity for the small countries, selfishness as a behavioural pattern in international relations and the attempt to disregard the principles of equality among States, national sovereignty, self-determination, non-intervention, the non-threat or the use of force and the settlement of disputes through peaceful means — principles that have constituted the cornerstone of the United Nations.

We are also living in a world characterized by the exploitation and the horrendous destitution of over 1.3 billion human beings, who, while suffering on a daily basis and without giving up the hope of a better life for their children, wonder if we will still have sufficient reasons to reaffirm faith in the fundamental rights of man and in the dignity and value of the human person, as proclaimed more than five decades ago by the founders of the United Nations.

The attempts at imposing by force and under pressure the so-called right of humanitarian intervention are at present the greatest threat to international peace and security. We all know that the small group of developed countries — led by the United States and its allies with powerful forces — that attempt to impose this perilous concept in the discussions and decisions of our Organization, do not have to fear the consequences of recognizing such a right in international relations. They are not, as we are, the Euro-Atlantic rim, defined by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as the probable scene for their acts of aggression, and the new strategic doctrine of this alliance is not aimed at them, but at us, the poor countries.

Actions geared at fragmenting countries and nations, at recolonizing territories and re-establishing zones of influence must cease. The recent precedent of unleashing deadly wars against defenceless populations, without even consulting the Security Council, is not only a flagrant violation of the Charter, but it is also once again dragging the world into situations like those that once took over 40 million lives in a single war.

How many other wars against small, poor countries must be waged before we understand the need to respect the Charter and engage in a deep democratization process in international relations?

Is it possible that those who now buttress with threatening language their attempts at interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries have fallen for the idea that the serious problems of underdevelopment, the after-effects of colonialism, hunger, disease and the consequences of the constant pillaging of the third world countries — the real cause of current conflicts — can be resolved through use of smart bombs?

Is it not really paradoxical that Western Powers — while developing new, ever more sophisticated killing devices — intend to prevent poor countries from using conventional light weaponry that is essential to nations that, like Cuba, live under the permanent threat of military aggression? Enough of this hypocrisy and Pharisaic behaviour. The world will be really safer if total, complete disarmament takes place, including, especially, nuclear disarmament. There has to come a day when light weaponry will be eliminated, when other types of deadlier and more dangerous conventional arms — the much more dangerous and deadlier arms owned by a handful of developed countries — must also be disposed of — the sooner the better. Yes, mines must be eliminated, but the threats of aggression against poor countries must be eliminated long before that.

Will our planet, by any chance, be safer if the United States finally deploys its hallucinating, costly anti-missile defence system, through which that country's rulers deceive their own people by promising them protection against missiles when nobody knows really from where they could be launched?

Why does not the United Nations, instead of tamely following the hazardous death game with the Western Powers, focus its attention on the so-much trumpeted yet unfulfilled purpose of setting aside a portion of the nearly US$ 800 billion, currently used on military expenses, to promote development and try to save the victims of the silent war that, year after year, through disease and starvation, kills more than 11 million third-world children under 5 years of age?

In any case, peace will not be possible if there is no development for the over one hundred third-world countries that are presently observing, as stone guests, the irresponsible squandering of the wealthy, selfish consumer societies that insatiably eat up our children's future. Setting out to halve in 15 years the number of poor people that we now have is undoubtedly a remarkable endeavour, but how will the other half judge our goal if they are doomed to live as indigents all their lives?

What has become of the right to development that was once so solemnly proclaimed by this very General Assembly? Don't you think, dear colleagues, that the time has come for us to calmly and firmly set out to rescue the issue of the right to development as a United Nations priority? Isn't it precisely now — when nobody argues anymore about the resounding failure of the neo-liberal policies that the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank imposed on third-world countries with a fundamentalist stubbornness to the benefit of transnational companies — that our peoples, united as a great alliance for the most basic rights, must seize the opportunity to demand that a more outstanding, decisive role in these affairs be played by the United Nations Economic and Social Council and this General Assembly?

Why should we continue to allow international cooperation to virtually disappear, just now when it is most needed? Are we entitled to continue discussing, year after year, without any concrete outcome, the right to development, which our people are demanding, while we watch, scattered and disoriented, as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank continue to strip the Organization of the prerogatives bestowed upon it by the Charter? Those who have imposed such devastating decisions as those leading to the unbridled privatization of the national resources of third world countries and the indiscriminate liberalization of the capital account — thereby facilitating the outflow of the scarce foreign currencies from poor countries that, because of expediency or fear, have not been able to fight for the rights of their peoples — will be held to account by their children and by history.

The Millennium Summit, which ended with positive results, demonstrated once again that the devastating effects of imposing a neo-liberal model in a globalized world are hitting third world countries particularly hard. The socio-economic situation of such countries — especially those in Africa — is virtually untenable. Likewise, it made it clear that unilateralism and duress have no place in a world in which solidarity and cooperation are the only possible means to achieve salvation for all.

In the wake of the Summit, no doubts remain: now is the time to act, to adopt concrete measures in order to fight the poverty and underdevelopment currently afflicting the majority of the people of the world. Cuba, a poor country that nonetheless has a large store of human capital, has already started to take action. Deeds, not words, are what we need today.

Two years ago, we put in place a comprehensive health-care plan under which almost 2,000 Cuban health workers are rendering services, free of charge, in

16 countries of Central America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa. Now, given the urgent appeal of the African countries, we would like to reiterate the offer that President Fidel Castro made to the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the developed countries during the Millennium Summit to cooperate with Africa in the fight against AIDS and other terrible diseases currently threatening to wipe out an entire continent. Cuba is ready to supply up to 3,000 additional Cuban doctors and paramedics for such an undertaking in sub-Saharan Africa. They would also contribute to the training of African health workers in the field. But it is essential for the industrialized countries to do their share and to supply the necessary medicines and materials for the programme. Africa is waiting for us. Cuba stands ready. It is now up to the developed countries.

Democracy within countries is a goal that is being sought. That is certainly commendable if the diversity of cultures, identities, historical experiences, national realities and political models, and the right of each people to adopt, with complete independence, the system that it deems most appropriate, are properly respected. But is there truly any democracy in international relations at present? Unfortunately there is not.

In order to attain it, let us put an end to hegemonism, foster development, replace selfishness with cooperation and, finally, respect the purposes and principles of the San Francisco Charter. We must put an end, right now, to the arrogance of the few if we do not want the hopes for a world of justice and peace for all to crumble.

In order to attain it, let us ensure that the United Nations truly contributes to building solidarity among nations and not to the domination of a few over the overwhelming majority. Let us face up to the attempt of some to put pressure on the United Nations through the non-payment of agreed contributions. Let us reject the use of the United Nations to impose a new colonial order. Let us demand that the Security Council act as the representative of all, not as the servant of one. Let us prevent it from arrogating to itself powers that it does not have, thereby violating the United Nations Charter and operating without due transparency while it decides upon matters of life or death.

Democratizing the United Nations and its Security Council requires, as indispensable measures, the abolition of the vexing and anachronistic veto privilege; an increase in the number of Council members in proportion to the fourfold increase in the number of States Members of the Organization; the application of the principle of equitable geographical representation to the composition of that body, as with all others; and the fulfilment of its obligation, as enshrined in the Charter but ignored in practice, of reporting to the General Assembly.

Let us be realistic. Security Council reform is — I will not mince words — as far away today as it ever was. We should recognize that after seven years of fruitless efforts we have managed to agree only that it is necessary to increase the number of members of the Council. At this point, therefore, we believe that we should at least work to effect a proportional increase in the total number of Council members, both permanent and non-permanent, ensuring adequate representation for third world countries, as strongly reiterated by the Millennium Summit. How could the Security Council be expanded without the inclusion of a reasonable number of permanent members from the third world?

Forty years ago, on behalf of Cuba, the leader of a triumphant revolution proclaimed from this very rostrum the dreams of hope and social justice for which the Cuban people had struggled for almost a century. Most of the States now represented in this Assembly were colonies at that time. There was no talk then — as there is today — about saving Africa, while it was being ruthlessly pillaged. The time had not yet arrived when hundreds of thousands of Cubans would go to African lands to struggle for the real rights of its people, against apartheid, disease and illiteracy.

That was the moment when the United States Government set out to overthrow the Cuban revolution, which, committed to social justice and true independence for its people, threatened, through its ethics, its morality and its example, the secular domination that the United States had exercised over the entire western hemisphere. That was the moment when the economic, trade and financial blockade was implemented against Cuba — a blockade that, in the course of a harsh 40-year-old economic war, has engendered such shameful pieces of legislation as the Torricelli and Helms-Burton Acts. It has to do with the blockade that this very General Assembly has rejected for eight consecutive years and which is still in force despite worldwide rejection and the obvious disapproval of the people of the United States.

In these four decades, our people have resisted acts ranging from political pressures and attempts at diplomatic isolation to the most insidious lying campaigns, from subversion and terrorism to assassination attempts on its main leaders, from biological warfare to the most ruthless blockade and economic war and from the promotion of armed bands to military invasion and the threat of nuclear extermination. Today, on behalf of that same generous and courageous people, we can once again say to our third world brothers and to all those who anywhere in the world defend our right to life and development that revolutionary socialist Cuba will never cease to struggle for everyone's dreams.

Address by Mr. Salim Abdikassim Salad Hassan, President of the Somali Republic

Mr. Salim Abdikassim Salad Hassan, President of the Somali Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: Before giving the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdikassim Salad Hassan, President of the Somali Republic, I would like to welcome the President, who has recently participated in the United Nations Millennium Summit. I am pleased to note that Somalia is participating again in the deliberations of the General Assembly after a long absence. As members of the Assembly are well aware, participants at the Djibouti peace process agreed on a Transitional National Assembly which then elected President Abdikassim Salad Hassam and he was sworn in at a ceremony held in Djibouti on 25 August.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Abdikassim Salad Hassan, President of the Somali Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Salad Hassan: It is a singular honour and privilege for me to be here today to address this session of the General Assembly. On this auspicious occasion, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your unanimous election to this eminent position. Taking into account your Excellency's wide experience in international affairs, I am confident that you will successfully contribute to the work and deliberations before this Assembly.

Permit me also, Mr. President, to pay special tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, who conducted the affairs of the Assembly in a most successful manner during his term of office.

Our profound gratitude also goes to our able and dynamic Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, who has shown exemplary leadership and demonstrated efficiency in managing the activities of our Organization. Indeed, he has played a pivotal role in the enhancement of the Organization's aims and objectives, and in furthering peace, stability and international cooperation the world over.

I am highly honoured to address this Assembly today in the presence of my colleague and brother, His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti. In this regard, I would like to pay special tribute for the exceptional role played by His Excellency, his Government and the people of Djibouti in our recently concluded national reconciliation conference, held in Arta, a resort town near Djibouti.

In contrast to the previous 12 Somali reconciliation conferences, held in the past 10 years in various capitals, the Arta reconciliation conference was unique and more focused. While the previous reconciliation conferences were based on attempts to reconcile the personal differences and rivalries between power-seeking faction leaders, the Arta conference, on the other hand, concentrated essentially on the *constructive engagement* and *the interaction of the* various components of Somali society, such as traditional clan elders and sultans, religious leaders, intellectuals, politicians and representatives of the various sectors of Somali civil society. More than 2,000 delegates from inside and outside the country attended the conference, the deliberations of which continued for more than five months.

It was in the context of this transparent process that a consensus was reached on the agenda and criteria for participation in the conference, based on the balanced and equitable representation of the various clans in the country. In pursuance of this innovative approach, the conference conducted its business. This led to the general agreement on the adoption of a Transitional Charter. The Charter, inter alia, provided for the establishment of the basic constitutional organs of the Third Republic of the Somali State: the National

Assembly, the President, the Council of Ministers and an independent judiciary. In accordance with these transitional measures, the first organ the conference established was the National Assembly. In turn, the National Assembly elected the President in a fair and free manner in the presence of observers and representatives of the international community.

The outcome of the Arta reconciliation conference received an overwhelming endorsement of the Somali people within the country and in the diaspora. Strong messages of support and pledges poured into Arta from all regions of the country and from Somali communities abroad.

In contrast to anarchy and civil war, which prevailed in Somalia for the past 10 years, the creation of the National Assembly and the election of a President ushered in a new era for peace and stability and constituted the first step of restoring order and central authority to the country. This was indeed translated into reality during my recent visit to Mogadishu and Baidoa. The spontaneous reaction of the hundreds of thousands of people who welcomed us in both cities demonstrated vividly that they wanted to leave years of civil war behind and open a new era of peace, tranquillity, good governance, restoration of the rule of law and national unity.

In this connection, let me emphasize the fact that the majority of the Somali people in the regions that we were not able to visit, including the regions in the northwest and northeast of the country, uphold a shared commitment and optimism for the unity and future progress of the country.

With regard to the warlords and individuals who still remain outside the reconciliation process, we express our full preparedness to engage with them in peaceful dialogue, and we call upon them to review their positions, hear the voice of reason, and respect the legitimate aspirations of the Somali people to achieve national unity, social and economic development and durable peace throughout the country.

The challenges that the Somali Republic faces today are monumental. My Government is prepared to meet those challenges with a realistic approach. We understand that our country stands today in the midst of a crisis of serious proportions. We shall exercise care, compassion and objectivity to manage that crisis and overcome it in the end.

There has been large-scale destruction of the physical infrastructure and resources in both urban and rural areas. Generations of children have not gone to school for almost two decades. A good number of high-level managerial staff and skilled technicians have left the country. The role of the international community in assisting us in peace-building, rehabilitation and reconstruction is therefore of pivotal importance for us. There should be no relaxation by the international community in the overall effort to provide humanitarian and developmental assistance to the Somali Republic.

We will engage Somali professionals and technical experts inside and outside the country to be actively involved in all reconstruction programmes and projects. We will also give indigenous and international non-governmental organizations and relevant United Nations agencies all the necessary assistance to be able to contribute effectively to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country.

I would like to emphasize that my Government will place particular emphasis in the immediate future on the following priority areas: first, restoration of peace, stability and national unity, and the formation of an effective security force to consolidate them; secondly, disarmament of the militias and their encampment, subsequent rehabilitation and training in all the regions of the country; and, thirdly, maintenance of law and order through the creation of effective law enforcement agencies and professional courts of law. Within the framework of that policy, my Government will promote and consolidate peace, security and unity in the country at large.

At the international level, we reaffirm our unqualified support for the principles and objectives of the United Nations and pledge to cooperate with relevant regional and subregional organizations, namely, the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development. We shall also maintain and strengthen our relations with the European Union. We would like to open up new vistas of cooperation and economic ties with other organizations, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Association of South-East Asian Nations.

My Government will promote strong links of cooperation with the countries of the Horn of Africa

and the Red Sea based on the principles of mutual respect, sovereign equality of States and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, as provided in the Charter of the United Nations. We will promote economic partnership, open borders and common port services among the countries of the Horn of Africa.

In conclusion, my delegation requests the Assembly to facilitate the adoption of a resolution under the title "Assistance to the Somali Republic" relating to the following areas of need: first, urgent assistance from Member States for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Somalia; secondly, resumption of sustained economic cooperation with the international community in general and with Member States of the United Nations in particular; and, thirdly, a call on relevant United Nations agencies and organizations to redouble their efforts in providing financial and material assistance to the people of Somalia.

Finally, I extend my profound appreciation to the United Nations for the commendable role it has played in the efforts to alleviate the plight of the Somali people during the last 10 years. We also wish to express our appreciation for the efforts of the world body in its continued search for a solution to our political crisis throughout the decade, and for its continued humanitarian support and assistance to the Somali people. I am confident that the United Nations will continue to provide support for the realization of the aspirations of the Somali people to stability, peace and development.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Somali Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdikassim Salad Hassan, President of the Somali Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand, His Excellency The Honourable Phil Goff.

Mr. Goff (New Zealand): I begin by joining others who have congratulated you, Mr. President, on your election. I also assure you of the New Zealand delegation's full cooperation as you carry out your important duties.

I also welcome the admission last week of our neighbour and friend Tuvalu into the United Nations. The admission of four new Pacific nations in the space of a year contributes to the truly universal character of the Organization.

This general debate is taking place at the start of a new century and a new millennium. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called upon the Member States of the United Nations to harness the symbolic power of the millennium to meet the real and urgent needs of people in every part of the world. This is an appropriate time to recommit ourselves to the beliefs, the values and the principles that led to the birth of the Organization 55 years ago.

Like many other Members of the Organization, New Zealand is a small country that tries to take a principled and independent view of the world. In 1945, in San Francisco, we played an active part through the Labour Prime Minister of the day, Peter Fraser, in framing the Charter in which heads of State and Government reaffirmed their faith here last week.

We have always viewed the maintenance of international peace and security, and the practical task of peacekeeping, as key roles of the United Nations. We are currently making our largest-ever contribution to the United Nations peacekeeping operation in East Timor. This commitment underlines our full support for the central role of the United Nations in building a stable, democratic and economically viable East Timor in partnership with its people. So do the non-military personnel and development assistance we have provided to help the East Timorese create essential services.

Just over a year ago, the East Timorese people voted overwhelmingly for an independent future, and I had the privilege of being part of the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) group that oversaw that electoral process. We recall the horrors which followed as pro-integration militias laid waste to the territory, slaughtered innocent people and forced thousands of East Timorese into West Timor.

Relative calm and stability has been restored in most of East Timor, and we remember here today the sacrifices made by peacekeepers from Australia, Bangladesh, Nepal and my own country who in recent

months laid down their lives to help achieve this. But the militias continue to hold sway in the border areas among the refugees in West Timor. Unless brought under control, these militias will destabilize both West and East Timor.

The murder last week of three United Nations humanitarian workers in Atambua in West Timor repelled us all. New Zealand was able to respond quickly, along with Australia, to the United Nations call for help in evacuating their colleagues and non-governmental organization personnel from Atambua. We committed helicopters with security and medical elements from our forces serving on the border with the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). This airborne evacuation, which had the cooperation of Indonesian forces, was successful. But the pain and the outrage we feel at the murder of three United Nations humanitarian workers remains undiminished.

The Security Council, in its resolution 1319 (2000), insisted that the Government of Indonesia disarm and disband the militia immediately to ensure safety and security in the refugee camps and for humanitarian workers, and to prevent cross-border incursions into East Timor. It also called for those who have carried out attacks on international personnel to be brought to justice. These are binding obligations. The world awaits action to implement them without further delay.

Besides East Timor, New Zealand is at present contributing to 12 other peacekeeping operations, including in Kosovo, on the borders of Syria, Israel and Lebanon, in the Prevlaka peninsula and in Sierra Leone. New Zealand personnel also serve with the Peace Monitoring Group in Bougainville, the Multinational Force Organization (MFO) in Sinai and with the Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia. Being conscious of the many challenges faced by the United Nations in meeting its peacekeeping responsibilities, we greatly welcome the Brahimi report. We trust that the report's important recommendations will receive serious and expeditious consideration during this Millennium Assembly session, with a view to their early implementation.

As the Brahimi report points out, weak mandates and poor resourcing underlie most of those operations which did not succeed in their objectives. We are concerned too at the tendency to rely overly on "coalitions of the willing" to carry out operations that should be undertaken by the United Nations. The failure of some Member States to pay their assessed contributions on time, in full and without conditions imposes an impossible burden on the Organization and on troop contributors. We agree that the scale of assessments for peacekeeping needs revision to make it more equitable and transparent. Any revision must be established in accordance with the longstanding principle of apportioning expenses according to Member States' capacity to pay.

Heads of State or Government agreed at the Millennium Summit to intensify their efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. In the past seven years of debate on this matter, it has been shown just how difficult an issue it is, especially in regard to how the Council might be enlarged. There is no agreement on this aspect at this time. And yet I am sure that most Member States would agree that the Council must be made more representative of today's membership as well as more transparent in its working methods and more democratic in its decision-making. If there is to be progress towards an overall package deal on reform, then compromises will have to be made.

At the heart of any reform, in New Zealand's view, must be the curtailment of the veto, if indeed it cannot be eliminated. We have argued this case since 1945, and we believe that it is even more relevant today. A device which 50 years ago might have had the utility of preventing the permanent members from using the Organization to make war on one another has in recent times served to frustrate the will of the wider membership. I believe there is very broad agreement in the General Assembly on the need to deal with the veto urgently, so that the Security Council can be more effective in carrying out its important responsibilities.

I would not want to suggest that there has been no progress at all on Council reform. There have, in fact, been some major steps forward in opening up the Council's meetings and briefings to participation by non-members. We are grateful for that. I would also like to reaffirm New Zealand's strong support for the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, whose deliberations have contributed to this progress. In our view, the Working Group continues to be the appropriate forum in which to pursue efforts aimed at reforming the Council, because it is essential for the health of the Organization that any reform

package enjoy the widest support and buy-in. Council reform is too important a matter for back-room deals.

The Millennium Declaration contains some important guidance on human rights, democracy and good governance. For example, all countries are enjoined to strengthen their capacity to implement the principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights, including minority rights. This could not be more timely for my own region, the South Pacific, where over the past year we have seen the collapse of democracy and governance in some countries in the face of disputes over land and economic disparities and as a result of ethnic tensions.

There are no easy solutions to some of the problems the region faces, but one thing is clear, and that is that the answer to these problems is not to adopt political systems that discriminate against particular ethnic groups, as some in Fiji this year have sought to do. To do so simply breeds a deeper sense of frustration and exclusion, which is a recipe for further instability. Small States, especially small developing countries like our neighbours in the Pacific, face particular challenges from globalization. They are uniquely vulnerable to external impacts. We need to find fresh and more effective means to development.

It is essential to help countries build for themselves inclusive and democratic forms of government that in turn take account of cultural values. Underpinning this must be robust and accountable institutions, respect for the rule of law, independence of the judiciary, an effective press, strong civil society and, above all, greater public education to foster a more widespread understanding of democratic values and processes.

The Millennium Summit provided heads of State or Government the opportunity to take action on a range of treaties which are fundamental to the development of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. My Prime Minister took action in respect of six, and I record here in particular New Zealand's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The practices of child prostitution, child pornography and the appalling exploitation of children to fight wars are a disgrace and a crime against humanity which must be expunged. We encourage others also to sign and ratify these agreements. I should also add that we greatly welcome the recent decision by the Economic and Social Council to establish a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

At the Millennium Summit, world leaders agreed to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. The outcome of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in May, where the five nuclear-weapon States gave an unequivocal political undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, demonstrates a new determination to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. This is a matter of real urgency. We must promote the implementation of the new commitments. New Zealand, with its new agenda partners, will submit a draft resolution during this session of the General Assembly.

New Zealand will also, in partnership with Brazil, promote a southern hemisphere free of nuclear weapons. In addition, we will, along with Australia, Mexico and Japan, urge all countries that have yet to do so to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We will also support further preparations for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and join calls for adherence to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

New Zealand urges caution regarding decisions on missile developments that could impact negatively on nuclear disarmament, lead to a new nuclear arms race or be inconsistent with the commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. This is no time for complacency. The United Nations disarmament and arms-control machinery must engage again in negotiations and other work on the new programme of action agreed at the NPT Conference.

Leaders also declared their resolve to minimize the adverse effects of United Nations economic sanctions on innocent populations. Sanctions are an important tool at the Security Council's disposal to encourage compliance with its resolutions, but they must be appropriately targeted for maximum effect. They should not impose blanket measures which harm

innocent populations and even strengthen the grip of despotic regimes. We support efforts within the Organization to develop proposals for smarter, more effective sanctions which apply pressure where it we will have maximum impact.

The Millennium Declaration also speaks of the need to protect our common environment. My Prime Minister announced during the Summit our intention to become party to the Kyoto Protoco to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by mid-2002. I also wish to recall a particular achievement over the past year in the holding of the inaugural session of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Ocean Affairs and the law of the sea. This is a significant step forward in providing an appropriate forum for discussion of cross-cutting oceans issues. The success of this process should be judged by the extent to which there is enhanced global understanding of oceans issues and an increased willingness to cooperate and coordinate cross-sectorally to address them.

Finally, the Millennium Declaration sets some key goals for development and poverty eradication and urges meeting the special needs of Africa. This year, New Zealand was able to increase its core funding of the United Nations Development Programme by more than a third and of the United Nations Children's Fund by almost a half. We believe that the United Nations has a key role to play in the coordination of official development assistance delivery. The preparations for the event on financing for development are an excellent demonstration of leadership by the Organization and a significant step forward in furthering cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions. The crushing and seemingly never-ending debt burden, especially on the countries of Africa, must be urgently reduced. We must also address more effectively the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

Leaders at last week's Summit provided this Millennium Assembly with a clear direction and a strong mandate. Our countries have delegated us the responsibility to realize that vision of a better world and we must ensure through our efforts and determination that we do not fail them.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Charles Providence Gomis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Gomis (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you preside over the work of the General Assembly at this fifty-fifth session. You may count on my delegation's support.

I should also like to pay an unqualified tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for the quality of the work accomplished during his term of office, and to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan, a great African of whom we are all proud, for his commitment to strengthening the universal role and the credibility of our Organization.

The United Nations family is growing day by day, for which we all rejoice. That is why my delegation welcomes the Republic of Tuvalu.

Before addressing the situation prevailing in my country, I wish to share some of our concerns about the international situation.

The challenges of the third millennium are not new. They have been broadly outlined by the Secretary-General in his report, entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century". For the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire, given the difficulties facing the international community, the issue is above all the need to draw up new solutions in adhering to carefully established priorities.

As the Secretary-General stresses in his millennium report,

> "the 1 billion people living in developed countries earn 60 per cent of the world's income, while the 3.5 billion people in low-income countries earn less than 20 per cent". (*A/54/2000, para. 69*)

Furthermore, the technological progress that has been achieved in computer science and communications, which we welcome, has unfortunately also created a digital gap that has further marginalized the poor countries.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

If, for the time being, we acknowledge the advantages of globalization, it does seem to us that it is not taking sufficient account of the concerns of developing countries, particularly those in Africa. In fact, the rate of Africa's participation in international

trade is still below two per cent. In sub-Saharan Africa, particularly, the degree of poverty is almost the same as it was 20 years ago. This is why we would earnestly appeal for Africa's integration and involvement in those efforts to build a new architecture of the world economy. Poverty and deprivation, which are the daily lot of peoples in the developing countries, are further exacerbated by the debt burden on their economies.

In the particular case of my country, I would like to emphasize that, even under the current difficult circumstances, my Government continues to allocate 52 per cent of its budgetary earnings to paying off its external debt, and, quite naturally, this is to the detriment of the priority programmes relating to health, education and food self-sufficiency. Adding to this, we must not overlook inflation and speculation, which lead to fluctuations in our commodity prices.

In addition to our main preoccupation, which is combating poverty, Côte d'Ivoire believes that to resolve conflicts, preventive diplomacy must be strengthened and seen as a complementary dimension to peacekeeping operations in the field. The conflicts that beset the world have meant that peacekeeping operations, which have become more and more complex, are now in the forefront of United Nations activities. Preparing for, organizing, setting up in the field and financing these operations requires considerable effort and considerable means. Those conducted in recent years throughout the world, particularly in Africa, have unfortunately not had the results we had hoped for. The experience of the "Blue Helmets" in Sierra Leone is illustrative of this.

We hope that the excellent report of Ambassador Brahimi, who has put forward new guidelines for United Nations peacekeeping operations in the twenty-first century, will be given the attention by States Members that they deserve, so that acting on these recommendations will endow our Organization with the means it needs to play the role which it should in preserving international peace and security.

We very much welcome the conclusions of Beijing Plus Five and the commitments which have been entered into in order to bring about the advancement of women. We are convinced that these commitments will make it possible for women to fully exercise all their rights and to finally achieve full and complete equality. Côte d'Ivoire, which was actively involved in the work of this important meeting, commits itself, for its part, to working for the implementation of the targets set.

May I, at this juncture in my statement, refer to the question of the much-needed structural reform of the United Nations, particularly that of the Security Council. In these new circumstances, Côte d'Ivoire would like to reaffirm the position held by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which is claiming two permanent seats and two new non-permanent seats in the Council.

To return to matters in Côte d'Ivoire, and the situation prevailing there, I would like to recall that on 24 December 1999, my country underwent its first experience of an institutional change taking place apart from the balloting boxes. In fact, on the day before that, a military mutiny, on the part of soldiers who were claiming better living conditions, resulted in the toppling of the existing constitutional order. This unexpected speeding up of events in my country aroused, and continues to arouse, major concern within the international community, a concern and an anxiety which points to the interest that the international community attaches to my country. Up until now, Côte d'Ivoire, considered as a haven of peace and an oasis of stability, and recognized as a driving force in the economy of the subregion, particularly of those countries that constitute the West African Economic and Monetary Union, has been playing an important and irreplaceable part as a regulatory force in West Africa. The millions of our brothers who have come from countries in the subregion, and who live in my country, are substantially responsible for generating the money circulating in their countries of origin. If this country, Côte d'Ivoire, were to implode, it would have unforeseen consequences for the process of solidarity and sharing.

On 23 July, the Ivorian people expressed themselves through a referendum on the new draft constitution and electoral code placed before it by the transitional Government. It should be recalled that the military arm was involved neither in the drafting of the new constitution nor in that of the new electoral code. The political parties, social and professional organizations, the administrative regions of the country, religious organizations, women's and youth associations and non-governmental organizations — in other words, civil society — were those who, through their freely appointed representatives, drafted and submitted to the Government these new fundamental

texts that the Government, in turn, simply placed before the populace for its approval.

This consultation, the transparency of which was very much heralded by the international community, was characterized by a massive turn-out of the electorate of 86.23 per cent. We believe that this result should, in itself, be enough to put an end to the discussions and speculations that preceded and followed the referendum, the tone of which, in many respects, was not to the liking of the people of the Côte d'Ivoire and their friends.

We welcome the efforts made by the United Nations, the European Union, the OAU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in order to try and bring about common ground among the political circles in Côte d'Ivoire and to support the transitional process. Therefore, the international community should be reassured that the people of Côte d'Ivoire will, on 22 October of this year, express their wishes through fair and transparent elections for candidates whose eligibility has been established by the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court.

To spend time today still talking about the requirements for eligibility, as contained in the texts that have been adopted, would be an attempt tantamount to trying to perpetuate a discussion whose fate has already been definitely, once and for all, sealed by the people of Côte d'Ivoire.

Trained in the school of the founding father of modern Côte d'Ivoire, President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the apostle of peace, and belonging as we do to a subregion that has been beset by conflicts, some of which have taken place at the very gates of Ivorian territory, the people of Côte of d'Ivoire are only too well aware of the importance of peace. The people are determined to preserve peace without backsliding or compromise.

My country is not xenophobic, nor is it a place of exclusion. Côte d'Ivoire is still the only country in the world where foreigners account for more than 40 per cent of the total population. The problems of all kinds that arise from this unparalleled immigration — social, economic and even political — are real. The country is addressing and coping with them as best it can. We do not wish our brothers and sisters, who are living on very good terms with the Ivorian population, to leave.

In this respect, we are very proud of being the most integrationist country of the Economic Community of West African States and we intend to remain so. That is why we believe that the desire of the Ivorian people to offer one single political post, that of President of the Republic, to a citizen of established background should not serve as a pretext for spreading malicious rumours about our country and its people.

In this connection, we are counting on the understanding and support of the international community to help us successfully through this transition and, within our self-imposed schedule, to achieve the state of constitutional normality that our people so earnestly desires.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kamal Kharrazi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran) *(spoke in Persian, interpretation provided by the delegation)*: Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mr. Holkeri on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly and to assure him of the full cooperation of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the discharge of his important responsibilities. I wish also to register our appreciation for the efforts of his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the Foreign Minister of Namibia. My thanks and gratitude also go to our Secretary-General for his tireless and constructive endeavours on behalf of the Organization.

The world is currently undergoing the most radical changes ever experienced by mankind. In such a rapidly changing environment, the main challenge facing the United Nations is to keep pace with events and try to play a leading role in directing their course in a way more compatible with the interests of the overwhelming majority of the world's population. The recently concluded Millennium Summit provided a unique opportunity for global leaders to draw up a collective agenda for addressing this historic challenge.

As the sole universal body, the United Nations is uniquely positioned to be the instrument of democratic global change. It can help to ensure that the process of change and transformation in the global system is participatory and fair. The focus of our attention at the global level over the past 55 years has been on the preservation of international peace, security and stability. Despite the tremendous economic and technological progress that has been achieved, justice

and universal participation in decision-making and in the benefits of peace and progress have attracted less global attention and fewer resources.

As the Secretary-General points out in his millennium report, the benefits and costs of globalization have not been evenly distributed. While world trade has increased more than ten-fold since 1950, over half of the world population continues to live on less than $2 a day and three quarters of the world population earn less than 20 per cent of total global income. The common destiny of humanity in the age of globalization requires us to reject the illusion of building islands of affluence, prosperity and stability in a turbulent sea of war, poverty, disease, ignorance and insecurity.

Globalization is an economic, social and cultural reality. It should not just be allowed to happen — it is a reality that we can and should collectively manage. One key task is to ensure that the benefits of globalization are more evenly distributed. The millennium report of the Secretary-General sets out a number of realistic and quantifiable targets. Necessary resources need to be committed and those who have been mostly on the receiving end of the benefits of globalization have an added responsibility. The United Nations machinery should direct and coordinate bilateral and multilateral efforts in this regard.

Globalization has also further complicated the global menaces of terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking, necessitating the adoption of common and rule-based strategies to fight and eradicate them. Terrorism afflicts the entire international community and must thus be combated in its entirety, regardless of who its victims or perpetrators may be. In a globalized world, nothing can justify harbouring or providing safe haven to terrorists or condoning their activities. No nation can fight terrorism unilaterally. We need universal, non-discriminatory and comprehensive mechanisms to fight terrorism wherever it occurs and to deprive terrorists of their means of recruitment, operation and funding.

The role of the United Nations in this regard is indispensable. In this context, particular attention needs to be focused on cooperation in the field of transnational organized crime and drug trafficking, which, in addition to inflicting their own banes on humanity, increasingly provide income to terrorist organizations. We are prepared to participate actively in any endeavour to combat this scourge.

The menace of drug abuse and trafficking continues to take a heavy social, economic and political toll. It particularly afflicts young people, who embody the future. Combating drug trafficking is a costly exercise and requires international political will and serious burden-sharing. The provision of meaningful financial resources and modern equipment by target countries can enable transit countries, such as ours, to combat the problem at a fraction of the cost.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has done more than its fair share in preventing transit, seizing more than 70 per cent of all narcotics confiscated worldwide. The financial burden and, more importantly, the human sacrifice are unsustainable. More than 2,900 Iranian drug enforcement personnel have been martyred in the fight against drug traffickers. We appreciate the cooperation and support extended to Iran by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme in this regard, although its limited resources cannot cover the programmes it wants and needs to implement. It is important to stress that, in the absence of meaningful bilateral and multilateral assistance, the Islamic Republic of Iran will have to allocate most resources to combating domestic consumption and will not be able to sustain its fight against drug trafficking with the same vigour and energy.

As underlined by President Khatami here last week, the emergence of a world culture is another reality. But such a culture should not overlook native local cultures with the aim of imposing itself upon them. National cultures have gradually evolved in a process ensuring coherence in spite of the plurality and diversity that is found in many of them. This process creates a sense of belonging.

We need the same harmony and sense of belonging for the emerging world culture. The answer is participation and not assimilation and imposition. Last year, I proposed recognition of the right of nations and peoples to preserve and nourish their culture and cultural identity. The General Assembly adopted resolution 54/160 in this regard. We continue to believe that in the process of globalization, it is essential to recognize and respect cultural rights of individuals and communities.

We should transform globalization, particularly in the area of culture, into a democratic, participatory and

natural process of globality. The United Nations can facilitate this process by promoting dialogue for the exchange of knowledge, experience and understanding in diverse areas of culture and civilization. The promotion of global participation in the process will prevent a sense of alienation and "cultural homelessness" in major parts of the world.

The designation of the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations is the first step in this direction. The unprecedented worldwide reception of this proposal indicates first and foremost a general need for dialogue. The round table on dialogue among civilizations, which was held here in New York on the eve of the Millennium Summit with the participation of a significant number of heads of State, Foreign Ministers and prominent scholars and thinkers, underlined that dialogue should become the new paradigm of international relations. This constituted a proper launching of the United Nations Year of Dialogue. It must be augmented by serious programmes and the commitment of all to make this a meaningful reality which should persist in human experience long after the United Nations Year of Dialogue ends. In this context, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which is currently chaired by President Khatami, has recently adopted a draft "global agenda on dialogue among civilizations", to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. We hope that in the course of the next several months, consultations between various delegations will lead to further enrichment and the adoption of this draft at the next General Assembly.

The United Nations can naturally play a leading role in the democratic global change in the political scene. Crises in disparate parts of the world challenge the relevance of the United Nations, requiring it not to take the back seat.

The situation of Palestine represents a vivid illustration of the failure of the international community to provide justice to millions of people deprived of their homeland and the most fundamental human rights through State terrorism, aggression and foreign occupation. Of over 7.5 million Palestinians, 4 million live in diaspora, and many of the rest under foreign domination. This lies at the heart of the Palestinian question. Disregarding the joint processes of expulsion and occupation cannot lead to the restoration of peace and tranquillity in that volatile region. In fact, Israel's persistent disregard for the rights of the Palestinian people, coupled with Zionist policies of aggression, State terrorism and acquisition of weapons of mass destruction, continue to pose the greatest threat to regional peace, security and stability. Palestine belongs to all Palestinians irrespective of their creed. Peace can return to the region only through an end to the occupation of all Arab and Muslim territories, including the Golan Heights, the restoration of the rights of Palestinian people, including their right to return to their homeland, the exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination through democratic means and the establishment of their independent State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

The persistence of the tragic fratricide in Afghanistan, along with the dire humanitarian situation, violations of human rights, particularly those of women and girls, the production and trafficking of narcotics and the harbouring and training of terrorists have created a human catastrophe. Peace and national reconciliation can be attained only through abandoning the illusion of a military solution and the domination of one ethnic group. The United Nations, through the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the "six plus two" Group, continues to provide the most suitable mechanism to facilitate intra-Afghan dialogue aimed at a responsible, broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative government. The Islamic Republic of Iran has played an active role in this process. Also, in his capacity as Chairman of the OIC, President Khatami has undertaken an initiative to bring the warring factions to negotiations. We are prepared to continue this exercise in close coordination with the United Nations.

There are other humanitarian challenges emerging globally, requiring the United Nations to respond. Failure to act may bring about arbitrary and selective — and, naturally, politically motivated — responses from States and non-universal organizations. The articulation of the criteria for rule-based reaction and the allocation of necessary resources and capacity-building in the United Nations for timely response constitute two major tasks ahead. As the Secretary-General has pointed out, prevention through diplomacy and economic development is the most effective and least costly type of global engagement.

Good-governance at the international level requires the provision of rational and comprehensive mechanisms to ensure security for all. Nuclear disarmament is the most fundamental priority in this

regard. It is imperative to initiate multilateral negotiations for the elimination of all nuclear weapons, within a time-bound framework and through a comprehensive and universal convention. The proposal of the Secretary-General to convene an international conference on nuclear weapons is a valuable contribution; such a conference could build upon our collective achievement during the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. Furthermore, following the outcome of the NPT Review Conference, serious and comprehensive international pressure should come to bear on Israel to accede to the Treaty and to put its installations under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. This would pave the way for the establishment of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Finally, in reforming global governance, the role and efficiency of the General Assembly, as the sole democratic, universal and transparent organ of the United Nations, must be augmented. It should focus its deliberations on contemporary challenges rather than hold outdated debates, coupled with effective responses to the reports of other organs of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council.

Efforts to work out a special political role for the United Nations come at a time when the Organization is in one of the worst periods of its existence from a financial perspective. The tasks that the international community expects the United Nations to fulfil require more innovative ways of raising money for the smooth functioning of the Organization.

In this context, it may be instructive to remember that if only a tiny percentage of the military expenditures of the Member States were allocated to the specific activities of the United Nations, the goal of creating a more secure global environment would be much more efficiently achieved.

The current session of the General Assembly follows the Millennium Summit, the Inter-Parliamentary Union summit, the global gathering of religious leaders and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization roundtable on dialogue among civilizations. As such, it represents a tremendous and historic opportunity to take advantage of the political will expressed in those unprecedented gatherings, to operationalize their declarations and decisions, and to move the United Nations forward to an era of stability, justice, peace and good governance, through participation and the rule of law. Commensurate with such a historic opportunity, we are all accountable before our own people and the people of the world.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.